

## Competency mapping

Competency mapping is the process of identifying key competencies for a particular position in an organisation. Once this process is complete, the map becomes an input for several other HR processes such as job-evaluation; recruitment; training and development; performance management; and succession planning.

For competency mapping to be productive, the organisation has to be clear about its business goals in the short- as well as long-term and the capability-building imperatives for achieving these business goals.

The process starts from as macro an endeavour as understanding the vision and mission of the organisation and how that translates into specific, time-bound business goals.

It then goes on to delineating the organisation structure clearly, and identifying the various levels and positions, as well as the reporting relationships obtaining within that.

For each position / level, the mapping exercise should outline the roles and responsibilities of the position; short-term goals to the extent that they are qualified; skill sets required for the job; and soft skill sets required for the job plus interaction with other units / personnel.

Once this is done as specifically as possible, the next step would be to assess where the individual currently filling the position stands in terms of what is required.

This would indicate the gaps between the skill sets required and the skill sets possessed.

It is also useful if the competency of the current incumbent is assessed keeping in mind the next promotion and the competencies required for that position. This will enable the organisation to remain one jump ahead of the game.

The assessment of the competencies required as well as the current competency level should be completed using a combination of structured and in-depth interviews with the person supervising the position and with others in the hierarchy.

A skilled assessor needs to study the gaps and figure out which ones can be filled through training, and which cannot. For instance, if a position requires working knowledge of MS Excel, that is something which can be addressed through training.

On the other hand, if a position requires the person to be an extrovert (such as being in-charge of network marketing) and the current incumbent is a confirmed introvert, then it would perhaps be better to redeploy the person. This will save the person the anguish associated with being in a wrong position and receiving negative performance appraisals.

Though there are well-accepted guidelines and assessment tools such as psychometric tests, the assessor's skill will play an important role in deciding when a gap calls for training and when it calls for redeployment

Competency mapping comes in very useful in the following situations: candidate appraisal for recruitment; employee potential appraisal for promotion; training needs identification; performance diagnostics; and self-development initiatives.

Apart from the above situations, organisations would also be well-advised to carry out a comprehensive, company-wide mapping exercise if it has never been done before.

As is the case with any HR appraisal activity, competency mapping too places emphasis on transparency, objectivity and quantification.

Oh, and one more thing, I have used the word skill in some places and the word competency in others. For the purpose of normal conversation, these words can be used interchangeably but, strictly speaking, the word competency covers the following: attitudes; knowledge; skill; and other characteristics of the individual (motives, values, traits, self-concept).

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